

informed John and as we carefully scanned the clump with binoculars, the crane slowly came out to the edge, where it stood motionless for a few moments. Suddenly it turned, running very rapidly back to the main sedge area. As it ran back, the tail was held in an erect position, and distinctive white barring was noticed on the underside of the tail. The head, breast and belly all were a dark bluish grey colour, while the wings were brownish black. The legs were also dark, possibly covered in mud, as were the legs of the Banded Landrails. After the observations were made, we walked back to our vehicle, and on checking through the field guides, we confirmed our identification of the Spotless Crane.

All observations were made with the aid of 8x binoculars at a distance of not more than thirty feet. The weather was fine and sunny and both observers have had experience with this species before. On the next visit to the area (25th August 1977), I was again fortunate to observe a similar bird as it moved across the track made through the sedge by buffalo. Unfortunately, this was a very brief glimpse and of little identification value, except to identify it as a crane.

As far as it is known, this is the first record of the Spotless Crane in the top end of the Northern Territory.

Tony Hertog,
P.O. Box 38595,
WINNELLIE, N.T. 5789.

Editor's Note:

This bird has been previously recorded in all Australian States except the Northern Territory, including the S.E. Gulf of Carpentaria region in Queensland. Its distribution is not well understood, probably because of its secretive habits. The recorded race in Australia is *Porzana tabuensis pluubea*, but other races occur in the islands north of this continent, from the Philippines through to the S.W. Pacific. Note that the Marsh Crane, *Porzana pusilla*, found in the Darwin area also has barred undertail coverts. A distinguishing feature of the Spotless Crane is its deep pink legs.

NOTES ON THE GENUS LINGULA

GRAHAM WHITE

Lingula is a very ancient genus belonging to the Pylum Brachiopode. Members of this phylum have the common name "Lamp Shells", as some examples resemble a Roman oil-lamp.

As the Brachiopods were most abundant in the Ordovician and Devonian periods, geologists use their fossils as a means of dating rocks.

Lingula has remained virtually unchanged since the Ordovician period, almost 500 million years ago, and now are uncommon but fairly widespread throughout the world. They are most common in Japanese and Australian waters.

Lingula live in burrows, five to thirty centimetres long in mud and sand at the low tide mark and resemble bivalve molluscs. However, whilst the valves of the bivalve are joined by a hinge, brachiopods hold their valves together solely by muscles.

This animal can be easily distinguished from a bivalve as it has a long, fleshy "arm", extending down into the burrow. This structure allows it to withdraw into the burrow at any sign of danger.

Although this animal probably occurs over much of the Northern Territory coastline in the littoral zone, to date, specimens have only been collected at Melville Bay on the Gove Peninsula and at Camerons Beach, Shoal Bay, near Darwin.

Graham White,
Dept. of Fisheries, Forestry & Wildlife,
Dept. of the N.T.,
BERRIMAH, N.T.

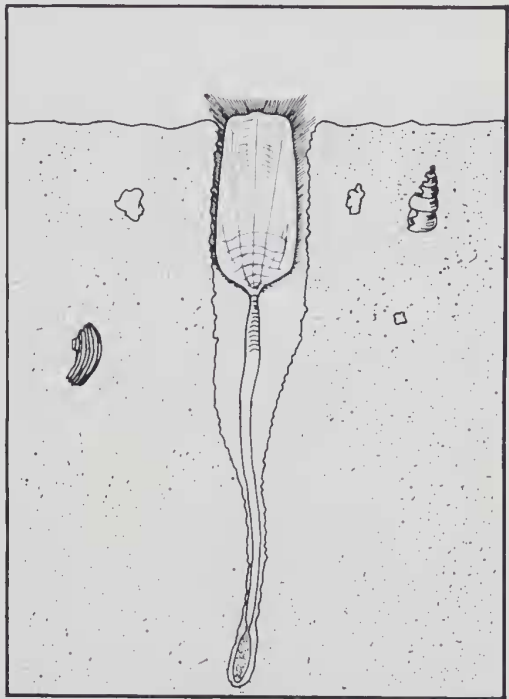


Fig. 1 Lingula — A diagrammatic representation of the lamp shell that occurs on the N.T. coastline, showing in particular the burrow, "arm", and main body of the animal in relation to the sand surface.